

# The Independent

No. 9.

Honolulu, H. I., Friday, May 10, 1895.

5 Cts.

## THE INDEPENDENT

ISSUED EVERY MORNING EXCEPT SUNDAY, BY

The Independent Association,

Corner Allen & Kekuanaoa Street (near Custom House) Honolulu, H. I.

DANIEL LOGAN, Editor.

Residing on Alakea Street in Honolulu.

### Subscription Rates

Per month.....\$ 75  
Per 3 months in advance.....2 00  
Per 1 year in advance.....8 00

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## PEARL HARBOR.

The History of its Acquisition.

ITS LOCATION, APPEARANCE AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS.

An Unorthodox View by a Student.

(Continue.)

### THE EAST AND MIDDLE LOCHS.

What has been said of the West Loch in the way of general description applies with equal fidelity, save for some unimportant details, to the East and Middle Lochs. Returning to the entrance and rounding the point of the peninsula to the northward (looking out for a shoal that makes out from that body of land and greatly reduces the width and hampers the navigation of the channel leading to the two Lochs last named), we encounter, at the head of the channel, the large picturesque island of Mokuumeume or Ford's Island, as it is locally called, from the family name of two generations of owners. Arrived at that point, a vista of rare beauty is opened on either side of the Island extending, on either hand, about two and a half miles across the waters of the lagoon variegated by the verdant shores of peninsula, island and mainland, with the state-ly background of Konahuanui mountains rising beyond and above the whole.

The main course of the channel we are navigating continues in a substantially northern direction, leaving Ford's Island on the east, while a channel much narrower and shallower, but which extends to a width of half a mile before the Island is passed, divides the Island from the mainland on the east, and opens into the East Loch, the most considerable in size of this remarkable group of water ways. This larger body is also reached from the main channel, by passing to the westward of and between Ford's Island and the Pearl City Peninsula, so-called, which protrudes from the northern mainland to the southward, about a mile and a half, and forms the barrier between the East and Middle Lochs. The former comprises fully three square miles of water, and lies chiefly to the northward, though partially to the eastward of Ford's Island; bounded north and east by the mainland, and west by the Pearl City Peninsula. It is completely land-locked, but is open to the trade winds and storms which occasionally sweep over the Konahuanui mountains, and render it at times extremely hazardous navigation by small crafts. The depth of water from the entrance into this Loch by the main channel (except for projecting bars and shoals which will yield to dredging operation,) is uniform at 7 to 16 fathoms, but this depth holds good in only a small portion of the Loch shows but 6, 5 and 4 fathoms, and toward the mainland at the north the shoaling process continues until a depth of but one fathom prevails, over a mud bottom, with outcropping ridges of lava rock. The Middle Loch is the least considerable in the group, in point of navigable area, though in superficial area it outranks West Loch. From the point of passing the strait where Beckoning Point

on that first described protrudes northward toward the foot of Pearl City Peninsula (in which strait 7 fathoms of water is found) the waters of Middle Loch shoal so rapidly as to be scarcely navigable by the smallest sailing craft throughout two-thirds of its length of nearly two miles. This portion of the lagoon is less interesting as well from a scenic standpoint. A short distance its shores sink from a height of about six feet (at which altitude they were plentifully covered with the inevitable algeroba) to a series of marshes too low for even rice culture. The green rice fields, succeeded by the rising grounds and bluff, beyond, with the mountain background relieving the monotony of muddy water and wet marshes, render the whole by no means uninspiring.

### AVAILABILITY FOR NAVAL PURPOSES.

It has become the custom with all who have developed either material or sentimental interests in promoting the acquisition of Pearl Harbor by the United States, to unreasonably extol the supposed benefits to Uncle Sam of such acquisition and to describe this body of water as the one thing needful to complete the naval supremacy of the United States in the Pacific. The present writer will not deny that the Pearl River Lochs, if open to the navigation of the American naval vessels, would constitute a most convenient and commodious harbor; but in even these respects, the Harbor has been and is vastly overrated. Supposing the outside entrance (of which more anon) to be cleared and rendered navigable for the ships, there would be considerable dredging of sand bars, and blasting of rocky ridges in the inner Harbor required in order to its safe navigation; while the area of deep water in the Lochs especially the East and Middle Lochs, will be seen from the foregoing, to be much less than is generally supposed and written about. It is a very easy, and somewhat sonorous declaration to make, that the navies of the world might ride at anchor in a given body of water, and Pearl Harbor has not been forgotten when that phrase was going around. And while it is quite true that all the national vessels of the United States could be at anchorage berths in this Harbor, it is equally true that, without a most extensive and costly system of dredging, the Harbor could not be made available for anything like naval navigation, as I understand the word navigation. The deep water of Pearl Harbor is confined almost exclusively to the narrow channels above described. Where they extend into lakelike proportions the water immediately shoals to a degree that makes naval navigation impossible. The channels holding the deep water are lovely and the great depth of water at the banks would be a great convenience in the matter of docking, but they are too narrow to permit a modern cruiser to turn around within their shores, even by the backing and tacking process, to say nothing of turning at one sweep. Therefore, if it be only an anchorage ground for his ships, of which Uncle Sam is in search, it can be found in Pearl Harbor (after the matter of the entrance shall have been adjusted), but if a maneuvering ground and protected body of navigable water is the object of the search, Pearl Harbor will not and cannot fill the bill, at least not without the expenditure of enormous and indefinite sums in dredging out the main bodies of the Lochs.

### THE HARBOR'S DEFENSIBILITY.

Another reason advanced in

favor of the acquisition of the Harbor is that it is so secure as to remove, or exclude all fears of its being tampered with by a hostile Power in time of war. It seems strange that anyone of intelligence can be found to advance that view, when the facts and the logic of the situation are so completely on the other side of the question. It is the most obvious of facts that, if the United States were once established in Pearl Harbor, she must be at the constant risk of losing it in case of war with any power, unless her naval contingent in these waters should be so strengthened as to bid defiance to the strongest power that could be sent against her. In order to hold the Harbor, she must be able to repel all intruders. This she might do by a system of mines planted in the entrance, but such an expedient would suspend the navigability of the entrance, even by her own vessels, and render it valueless either as a refuge for fleeing merchantmen, or as a source from whence to launch her naval enterprises against the enemy. In short, the Harbor could be hermetically sealed by a blockading squadron, and not only its usefulness as a recruiting and repairing station entirely neutralized, but the vessels within its shores would be practically removed from the navy list while such blockade should continue. It will thus be seen that the possession of this Harbor (and in a much greater degree of the whole group of Islands in the heresy of Annexation should gather force sufficient to bring about that end), would be a source of positive weakness, instead of strength to the Union. The property once acquired, it would have to be utilized at tremendous expense; and it would have to be defended at all hazards, a proposition involving the making of the American naval power supreme in the Pacific; and this means, in these days of rapid steam communication, making it supreme upon every sea.

The American public need no reminder that the cry for naval expenditure and an increase in the number and efficiency of ships comes chiefly from the officers of the Navy and their friends and relatives, who wish for more vessels to command, with the consequent opportunities for rapid promotion. The officers of that branch of the service are restive under condition which (in the words of Lieut. Staunton, in his article, "A Modern Battle Ship in Action,") render "a good digestion by far the most valuable qualification for attaining the rank of Rear Admiral," while they are playing the "waiting" game now essential to promotion in the Navy where, (still quoting from the Jingo Lieutenant), "the indolent and indifferent share honors equally with the ardent and enthusiastic." They want more opening for promotion, and they see those opportunities in the increase of the navy. Such increase can best and most easily be compassed by persuading the people of the United States that the necessities of their commerce or political prestige demand protection here, a fleet there, and a group of Islands yonder. None better than naval officers know that the possession of the Hawaiian Islands, for instance, would in reality prove a source of weakness rather than of strength to the Union, by rendering it essential that sufficient naval force be always maintained in these seas, to repel any attack from any combination of naval powers likely or possible to be brought against the Americans in time of war. This could only be done at fabulous expense,—some-

thing which, perhaps, the American patriotism would be equal to, as a means of protecting the integrity of its territory, but which can most conveniently be avoided by resisting the temptations of the Jingo party to acquire territory so far from their sea coast, which might, by any possibility, and very soon, require such expensive sacrifices in order to its protection.

When, therefore, you see an article or an argument in favor of either the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, or the acquisition of Pearl Harbor for a naval station it is safe to assume it has emanated from some Jingo naval officer; and all that such officers say in favor of either project is prima facie a plea for their own promotion, and unreliable both in fact and theory.

The fortification of Pearl Harbor has been discussed, and such project has been advanced as an argument to prove that it could be so defended from hostile attack. But a study of the conditions there existing will convince any reasonable man that fortifications sufficient to repel the attack of a modern naval power are impracticable; and that even if found feasible, they could be constructed only at a cost entirely out of proportion to the advantages to be gained here by.

To begin with, there is no eligible site for a fort within modern cannon shot of the entrance to the Harbor. The land, for many miles' radius, varies in altitude from one foot to eight feet above high water, and this in a locality where the mean rise and fall of the tide is but one foot, seven inches. Though the outer and inner reefs should be covered with fortifications the most formidable permitted by the situation, yet nothing strong than stone and cement could be opposed to the hostile guns of an enemy, and how long would the most perfect construction of such materials, when placed as a fair target for such guns, be left intact? The same result would follow the construction of so-called forts on the land commanding the entrance. In order to command the approach of a hostile fleet, such edifices must themselves be exposed to the fire of that fleet; and, in the utter absence of anything in the way of natural defensive strength in the position, who so sanguine as to hope or believe in the efficacy of mere masonry, when opposed to the steel of modern ordnance?

As above intimated, the land in the vicinity lies very low, for purposes of defense. This remark applies equally to those within the harbor, whether Island or peninsula. There is absolutely no suggestion of a natural stronghold in the situation. And this fact would not only render impracticable the efficient fortification of the entrance, but, granting, for the sake of the argument, that the entrance could be secured, there is nothing to oppose the shelling of the inner works by the long range guns now in vogue on naval vessels. A war vessel, lying end on to a fort at a distance of several miles, may present a very small target to the fort,—so small as to avoid mishap to the ship, while being able herself to effectively attack not only the fort, but also to throw destructive missiles past the fort and into the naval yard (supposing one to exist) beyond. And such, it seems to your correspondent, would be the condition of things, even in the event of the entrance to Pearl Harbor being effectively fortified; such course might, (though I do not believe it would) prevent the actual entry of a hostile craft, but could not protect the naval works which might be constructed in the lagoon proper.

(To be continued.)



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